THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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TRIAL DATE SET FOR ASHBY LEACH

Vets Plan Cleveland Action

Support to Free Ashby Leach grows as VVAW chapters (Philadelphia picket line, above) get the word out.

ON JANUARY 27TH, IN A CLEVELAND COURTROOM, ASHBY LEACH WAS DECLARED "COMPETENT" TO STAND TRIAL; THE JUDGE THEN SET MARCH 14TH AS THE DATE FOR THE TRIAL TO BEGIN.

MOVING ON FROM THIS VICTORY, VVAW AND THE ALDC CALLED FOR VETERANS AND OTHERS SUPPORTING THE CAMPAIGN TO FREE ASHBY LEACH TO COME TO CLEVELAND ON THE 12TH, 13TH AND 14TH OF MARCH TO SHOW THE BOSSES OF THE CHESSIE SYSTEM AND THEIR WHOLE CLASS THE SUPPORT THAT HAS BEEN BUILT AROUND THE COUNTRY.

Across the country support for the campaign to Free Ashby Leach is mounting. VVAW Chapters are holding demonstrations, picket lines, handing out leaflets, putting up posters, all designed to get out the word about the attempts of the Chessie System to crush the resistance of Ashby Leach and about how we will not stand for it but will fight until he is free. Petitions demanding Ashby's freedom, that Chessie Honor the GI Bill for All Its Veterans, and the GI Bill be Extended and Expanded are being signed from coast to coast. VVAW members are taking the struggle into schools, and the Revolutionary Student Brigade, a national student organization, has taken up the campaign in many of the schools where they have chapters. All of this work is now pointing toward the 12th through the 14th of March when we will come together in Cleveland.

Ashby Leach, who served in Vietnam as a medic, spent five years battling the Chessie System (a corporate conglomerate which merged the Chesapeake & Ohio, and the Baltimore & Ohio railroads among its many financial ventures) to get the company to pay apprenticeship benefits under the GI Bill for all its Vietnam veterans (the company paid similar benefits to vets of earlier wars). During this long period, Leach went through all the "channels" that vets are always told to use--he wrote letters, he talked to Chessie officials as well as bureaucrats

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Carter's "Pardon" Is Only Peanuts

One of Jimmy Carter's first acts after he took office was to issue a "full, complete and unconditional pardon" for anyone who violated the Selective Service Act between August 4, 1964 (date of the so-called "Tonkin Gulf incident" which was LBJ's excuse for massive escalation of the war) and March 28, 1973 (date of the Paris Agreements which amounted to formal recognition of the victory of the Vietnamese people). The pardon will mainly affect 8,500 people convicted of draft offenses, most of whom have already served time in prison, and 5,000 draft resisters in exile in Canada, Sweden and other countries. Yet, most of the newspaper and TV coverage of the pardon included short interviews with resisters in exile or in this country who were generally against Carter's plan. Why are these people criticizing something that's supposed to be in their interests?

The answer is simple. Carter's pardon is a fraud, a political manuever designed to mislead and misdirect the American people. First, it is an attempt to promote divisions among those who were victimized by the war, resisted it or rebelled against it, and to squash the struggle for universal and unconditional amnesty for all these people--resisters, deserters, veterans with bad discharges. Second, it is an attempt to salvage military discipline from the shambles of Vietnam. Third, it is an open bid to get the American people to forget the Vietnam war and what they learned from it. All three of these things are important steps for those who rule the US as

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DEMONSTRATE MARCH 12-14

In Cleveland, to

Free Ashby Leach

*PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL--PUT CHESSIE ON TRIAL
Saturday night, March 12th

*DEMONSTRATION AND RALLY--FREE ASHBY LEACH
Sunday morning, March 13th

*VET'S ENCAMPMENT
Sunday night, March 13th

*MARCH TO THE COURTHOUSE--TRIAL BEGINS
Monday morning, March 14th

Carter Pardon (cont'd)

their contention with their rivals in the Soviet Union heats up and edges toward war. They are steps to mold public opinion to their side.

Universal, unconditional amnesty has been a goal of the anti-war forces and VVAW for over five years. Carter's plan does not deliver. It does include, in addition to the resisters mentioned above, all those who didn't register for the draft during the period covered, a number estimated as high as 1 million men. This is an easy step, however, since the government has made no serious attempt to track down and prosecute all these people. Carter's pardon did not cover deserters from the armed forces, many from working class backgrounds or Blacks, Chicanos or other minorities, people who often did not know before going into the service that there were ways to avoid it or understand the unjust nature of the war until they were in the middle of it.

And the pardon does not cover the largest group which needs amnesty, the over 640,000 vets with less than honorable discharges. Many of these discharges were handed out to rebellious GIs who hated and fought back against the war, the racism of the military, and military Mickey Mouse. Often they were charged with violating regulations and given a choice--court martial or accept a less than honorable discharge and get a trip home. Many took it. These vets have an even harder time finding jobs than their brothers with good papers and in all but a few cases are cut off from receiving veterans' benefits like the GI Bill. The ruling class policy toward its soldiers--Use Once and Throw Away--applies to these vets with a vengeance.

Despite all the efforts of the media and reactionary vets groups like the American Legion to whip up veterans against pardoning resisters, more and more vets are realizing that draft resisters have been up against the same system that sent them off to fight and die to defend the profits of the rich, that now has them rotting in under-staffed, rat-infested VA hospitals, facing benefit cutbacks and disability "re-evaluations," standing in unemployment lines or stuck in low-paying sweatshop jobs.

The separation of those who resisted the draft and those who fought back inside the military is also aimed at propping up military discipline. The only way that the masses of people can be made to fight an unjust and unpopular war for the ruling class is by coercion. Bucking the armed forces even more than bucking the draft is always punished--extra duty, courts-martial, stockade terms, and bad discharges.

Despite all this, resistance in the military was extremely high during Vietnam, from individual goofing off to organized refusal to obey orders or go into combat to fragging of officers. The present pardon already has the Pentagon worried about discipline. Retired general William Westmoreland who was commander of all US forces in Vietnam has been whining about how it "will weaken the country militarily and hurt our morale." Imagine his reaction when universal, unconditional amnesty is won!

To try to cool out the demand further, Carter's pardon included instructions to the Armed Forces to study some categories of discharge with an eye to "a possible ungrading by category or an expanded and accelerated review process." Leaving this question in the hands of the military, whose present system could finish reviewing all bad discharges no sooner than the year 2177 is about the same as filing it in a wastebasket, as Carter knows full well.

Col. R.D.Heinl, USMC (ret), a syndicated military analyst/columnist, laid all the cards on the table recently voicing the sentiments of the rich when he wrote, "If some general amnesty were to upgrade the above half-million discharges to minimum honorable status, the cost in vets benefits and entitlements, not due at present, would amount to roughly $10 billion over the next three years and incalculably more for the years ahead." Col Heinl further stated, "Another serious risk involved in pardon for Vietnam deserters is the enforceability of any form of national conscription." In short, the rich are much more concerned about having to shell out bucks for the 640,000+ vets whose lives they've tried to destroy with bad discharges. They're just as concerned that the American people would refuse to enter the military or bring great disorder inside the military when ordered to fight, once the right to resist was recognized by universal amnesty.

The last big aim of the new president's pardon was, to cite his own words, "to heal our country after the Vietnam war" so that, while difference still remain, "we can now agree to respect these differences and to forget them." Forget them??? There's nothing Carter and the businessmen and bankers he works for would like better than to have the American people forget the Vietnam war, forget all that we learned about how, for the US, it was nothing but a rich man's war, forget that we rose up in the millions and fought against that war and helped bring it to an end.

Many of the spokesmen for the rich now say that the war in Indochina was in fact a "mistake." But that's another cover-up. The Indochina war was a direct result of the capitalists' need to ever increase their profits. They sent the sons of the working class to fight their bloody battles so that they could increase their plunder and maintain political control. But they came up against two obstacles: the determination and political strength of the Indochinese people who for years had fought for their own liberation, and the growing struggle of the American people to put an end to that war. All these lessons the ruling class hopes to blot out of the peoples' memories.

Angry reaction to Carter's phony pardon hasn't been slow to appear. Exile organizations and other groups fighting for universal, unconditional amnesty have declared that they are going to continue that fight. VVAW Chapters around the country joined in this angry response (see article at top of this page), determined not to forget the lessons of Vietnam and to fight until we win universal, unconditional amnesty!

VVAW ACTIONS HIT PARDON

A VVAW picket line organized by the Bay Area Chapter demands Universal, Unconditional Amnesty and a Single-Type Discharge on the steps of the Federal Building in San Francisco on the day that Carter issued his phoney pardon.

When Carter's "pardon" was announced, VVAW chapters around the country not only took actions to demand universal, unconditional amnesty, but also used the occasion to talk about the Vietnam War and why VVAW says the "We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War."

In Philadelphia, where

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Ashby Leach Tour Goes Coast To Coast

A big boost for the Campaign to Free Ashby Leach is coming from a nationwide speaking tour; at the time this paper is being written, Leach is speaking on the East Coast, to be followed by a quick trip to California and a tour through the Midwest, all building the campaign and pointing toward the demonstration in Cleveland on the 12th through the 14th of March.

In schools, in workers' centers, in halls, even in living rooms around the country, Ashby Leach is talking about why he seized the Chessie System headquarters office and held 13 hostages. And he is meeting with enthusiastic responses, with a number of questions, and finally with a lot of wholehearted support for the campaign to Free Ashby Leach.

At Kent State University (in Kent Ohio, near Cleveland) an invitation and offer of a fee for Ashby to speak was attacked by the Kent Stater, the local college paper, which compared Leach with Charles Manson. The controversy brewed up by this ridiculous attack helped to bring out some 200 students to hear Leach in person; and, though many of these students came prepared to be hostile, the program changed many minds. Of those students that members of VVAW talked to after the program, all said they were glad that Leach had come to the school.

The East Coast part of the tour began in Boston. There, 175 workers, vets, and students came to a dinner and program in Cambridge in order to hear Ashby Leach and watch the film "Only The Beginning," a movie which shows the growing resistance to the war in Vietnam and follows VVAW through Operation Dewey Canyon II when, in 1971, 1100 veterans went to Washington and threw away the medals they had been "awarded" for fighting a rich man's war. The enthusiasm which greeted Ashby Leach in Boston will translate into people coming to the Cleveland demonstration.

Many Boston vets caught the spark of the action which Asbhy Leach took in resisting the way in which vets are treated. During the Boston program, which included a chance for vets to speak out, a World War II veteran spoke of how he was cut off his VA benefits after 25 years, and spoke of how he would take his leg brace--which he's worn ever since the end of World War II--back to the VA to throw it in the face of the VA administrators. A Vietnam veteran, shot in the back during the war, and now walking on two canes, referred to the fact that Ashby was a medic in Vietnam and said, "When I got shot in Vietnam, people like Leach saved me. I'll be in Cleveland."

While talking to people in person is a vital part of the tour, the case of Ashby Leach is also being taken out through the media. In Boston, a half-hour interview with Ashby on station WILD so interested the man doing the interview that he is planning to go to Cleveland to cover the demonstration. In New York City, a columnist for the Daily News did his entire column on Ashby Leach. In every possible way the word about Ashby and his struggle--which is also the struggle of all vets--is getting out.

Wherever Ashby speaks he talks about his battle against Chessie which finally led to his takeover of the office, and about how that battle is continuing. During a December talk in Milwaukee Leach said:

"When I took over the 36th floor offices of the Chessie System I wanted to bring to the public attention the way Vietnam vets are being treated. I didn't kill anybody up there in the Terminal Tower, I didn't even hurt anybody. I was just willing to risk my life. Some people say that's weird, but when you risk your life a thousand times in Vietnam why can't you one more time when you're fighting the real enemy?

"So while I was sitting in jail under $450,000 bail I started getting messages of support. People from Washington State sent me a letter supporting me; Vietnam Veterans Against the War sent a telegram, 'Right on, brother! We're behind you 100%.' The mother and widow of a Marine veteran in West Virginia sent me $35 that he had left behind....

"In the rail industry they have altered the work rules to the point where different unions are crossing craft lines. They are combining jobs. They have laid off 25% of the work force since 1970. They think this is irrelevant because it involves people. They have increased their stock dividends by 20%. The other day in Congress they passed a tax law that was 1500 pages, that would take 10,000 lawyers to figure out. The essence of that law was that the rail industry got the biggest tax break in the history of the country, and the outcome is that Con Rail, Penn Central, and Chessie get our tax money in the form of subsidies. And then Chessie says they don't have to give GI Bill benefits...."

As more and more people around the country are able to hear Ashby Leach and come to see how vets are used once and then tossed aside, the support for the campaign to Free Ashby Leach is growing, and will come together in Cleveland on the 12th through the 14th of March, 1977.

Tour Schedule

EAST COAST

Feb 14	Baltimore, DC
Feb 15-16	Philadelphia
Feb 17-18	Baltimore, Norfolk
Feb 21	Wheeling, WVa
Feb 22	Cleveland for pre-trial hearing

WEST COAST

Feb 23	Los Angeles, San Francisco
Feb 24	Los Angeles, San Diego
Feb 25	Los Angeles

MIDWEST

Feb 26-27	Minneapolis/St Paul
Feb 28	Madison
Mar 1-2	Chicago
Mar 3	Milwaukee
Mar 4	Detroit
Mar 9	Cincinnati

(To find out the exact time and location of Leach's appearance your area, contact the "Local Contact" listed on the paper or the VVAW National Office.)

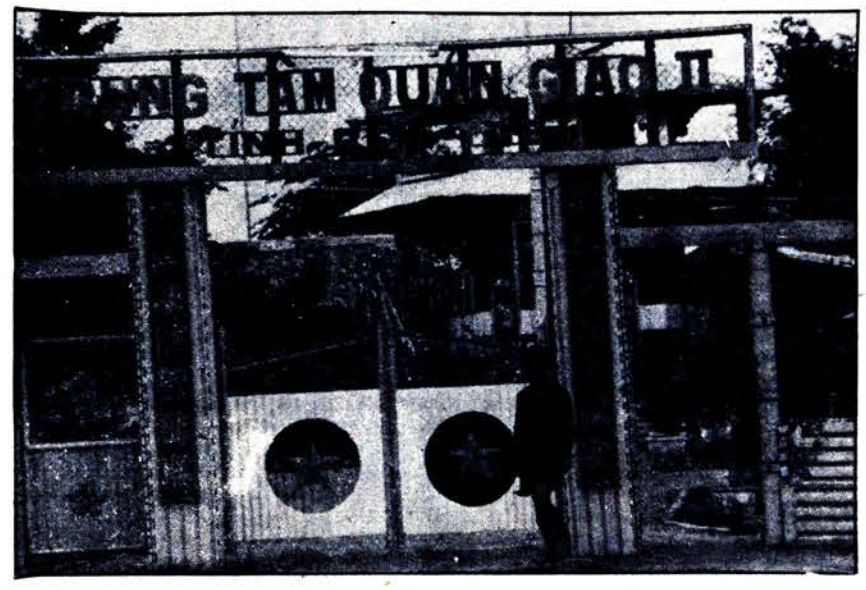
Support for the Campaign to FREE ASHBY LEACH is being built in a number of different ways. Here, the Los Angeles Chapter of VVAW carries a Free Ashby Leach banner during their Veterans Day action.

Reeducation Camps — Part of Social Change

VIETNAM SLANDERED BY EX-FRIENDS

By the end of the Vietnam war the vast majority of American people were in favor of US withdrawal. A military defeat in Vietnam and a vast popular peace movement here at home combined to force the US to retreat with its tail between its legs. This was a tough blow to the US ruling class. They need to exploit foreign countries in order to keep their needed profits rolling in. In order to do this they needed to play the tough guy role all over the world. The Vietnamese exploded their image.

When the final decision to withdraw was made US leaders began their efforts at face saving devices with all the hullaballoo about the POWs - men who shouldn't have been in Vietnam in the first place. Then when Saigon fell there was the orphan fiasco where the US actually kidnapped Vietnamese children to save them from the coming "bloodbath." Of course the bloodbath never came. Now the latest is a letter given wide circulation by the US press, talking about 300,000 political prisoners, torture and religious persecution in the reeducation camps in Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The letter was signed by about a hundred anti-war activists including heavyweights like Joan Baez and Daniel Ellsberg. Americans have since been to Vietnam and reported that the contents of the letter are false, and some of the signers of the letter - like the Berrigan brothers - have recanted their original signature.



A reeducation camp in the Southern part of Vietnam, a necessary part of the social change going on in that country.

There are reeducation camps in Vietnam, but they aren't the fierce, inhuman prison camps they are made out to be. They are necessary for the rebuilding of Vietnam. To understand their necessity one must remember what Vietnam was like before. One class of people hoarded most of the wealth while the masses of Vietnamese lived in poverty. This former ruling class was propped up by US military might. It had only minority support in Vietnam, but this still consisted of over a million people - soldiers, government officials and politicians. Because of centuries of foreign colonial rule all sorts of decadence was imposed on the country. After liberation the whole society had to undergo basic change - both political and cultural, and this is what the reeducation camps were designed to do.

There were two types of reeducation. For most ordinary people, reeducation as to the direction the new society was heading was undertaken in factories, schools, homes and out in the rice paddies. After years and years of propaganda by the old ruling class on the horrors of Communism people had all kinds of strange ideas about what would happen. Also people who had been devastated by the old society - whores - orphans - beggars - addicts - needed help to get back to a normal life.

Former soldiers, politicians and officials are required to take a three day reeducation course after which about 90% are released. There are still about 50,000 people left in reeducation camps. These are mainly former high ranking officials and officers who do not accept responsibility for their past crimes and refuse to accept the task of building a new society for the benefit of the broad masses of people. This former upper crust, while being reeducated is being made to do some detestable (to them) things - like work. All in all the reeducation program is very lenient considering these people comprised the leadership of the oppressive Thieu regime.

The former anti-war activists who signed that letter of protest missed the boat. That war was not the US military against all the Vietnamese people. It was the US military and its Vietnamese henchmen against most of the Vietnamese. Vietnam is rebuilding from centuries of devastation at the hands of foreign countries. They can't allow these former henchmen to remain free to try to bring back the old repressive ways which they've already tried to do with stockpiled

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ROTC CADET KILLED

JOIN NOW! FREE SCHOLARSHIPS! Become a pilot or a skipper of a nuclear sub. Remember, we offer you three hots and a cot plus an officer's commission that entitles you to give Mickey Mouse orders to enlisted men. ...The military is the biggest hype show going. Michael Cooper, like many other high school kids, said that it beats working eight years at McDonalds in order to save up enough to get through college. But on November 3, Michael Cooper's lifeless body became the repossessed property of the US Navy. He had decided the Navy wasn't his bag after being lied to and ripped off.

The death of this rural Waunakee, Wisconsin man in a shoot out with Dane County sheriffs which wounded three of them and cost Mike's life is a stark example of the Navy's don't give a damn attitude. It doesn't make a difference to them if you die fighting a rich man's war or die to be an example for refusing to serve.

Mike resisted the three deputies who tried to take him into custody for failure to report for active duty. His resistance was one that built up for four long years. He originally enlisted to be a pilot in the Navy ROTC program, in which the Navy paid for college and a small living expense. In his second year he went off to pilot training school where he became proficient at flying the Sky Hawk jet. After passing his training period, he was told by the Navy he couldn't become a pilot due to hayfever. They knew this two years previously when he took his enlistment physical.

But Mike still felt he was getting a good deal from Navy ROTC. He took a test to become eligible for a nuclear engineering position. Then he was told that he ranked thirtieth in the nation and that they didn't need him in that position either. Subsequently, Cooper dropped Navy ROTC as they dropped all their hotshot recruiting pitches.

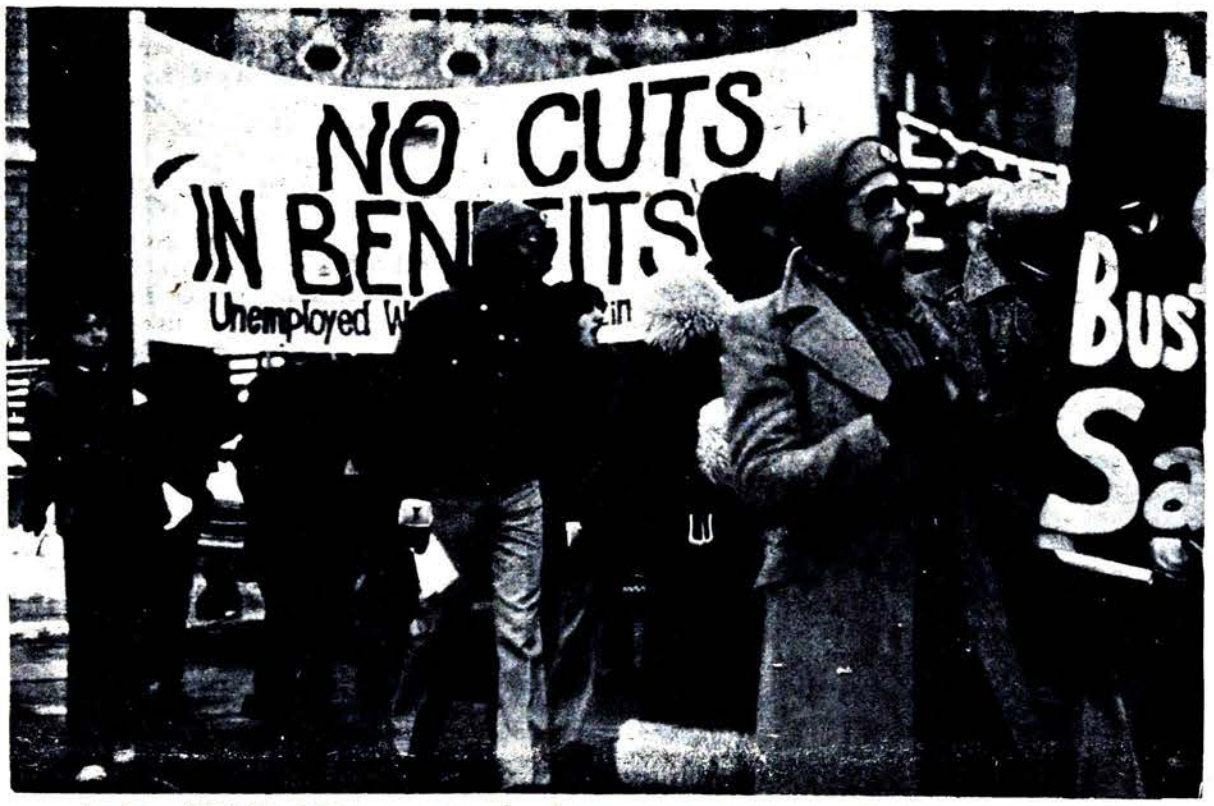
The Navy and Dane County sheriffs would never admit they murdered Mike Cooper. It was quite obvious from Mike's wounds and the shots that were found in the walls of his room that the Dane County sheriffs did him in. But at the inquest these guys acted like Starsky and Hutch. They should have won an Academy Award for their lies about how this so called mad man wounded three sheriffs and then took his own life. Hell.. when was the last time anyone shot three cops and lived to tell about it? That doesn't even happen on Adam-12!

The Navy can't stand the number of guys who have deserted or went AWOL. Navy AWOLs have reached the highest rate ever in 1976. This is two per cent higher than 1975 and more than double the previous highest rate which was during the Vietnam War.

Someone in the Navy Department finally said, "Freeze this stuff off." And that's just what went down. Mike Cooper was killed as an example for refusing to be lied to and abused.

Federal Extensions to End Mar 31

UNEMPLOYED FIGHT EXTENSION CUTS



Led by UWOC, 300 unemployed, youth, vets march in Washington on Jan 20.

On January 20, 1977, a contingent of veterans organized by VVAW joined with a march and rally of 300 unemployed workers and youth in Washington DC during Jimmy Carter's Inaugural Ball.

This militant demonstration was called by the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC), a national organization of unemployed workers, in response to the cutoff of the last 26 weeks of unemployment compensation.

On March 31, 1977, the last 26 weeks of unemployment benefits will be cut off unless Congress passes a bill to extend the federal extension. It's extimated that between 2.5 to 4 million people will be affected by the cutoff--left with no money to live on, or forced to go on welfare.

UWOC chose January 20th, during the Inaugural Ball to demonstrate against this cutoff because, as the poster calling for the demonstration read, while they--the rich--are partying, they are planning our starvation. It went on to say, "Let them party because as they party we will be organizing to right against every one of their attacks."

A car convoy left Boston, Massachusetts, in the early morning, highly decorated with signs and slogans demanding Jobs or Income Now, No Cutoff in the Federal Extensions, and On to Washington! The convoy met up with more cars in Hartford, New York City, Jersey City, and then headed to Philadelphia where it joined with the Philly UWOC chapter in a rally and press conference outside City Hall.

All the way from Boston to Washington the car convoy was met by a great response from passing cars and trucks. Over CB radio there was a lot of struggle with truck drivers and other CB operators about unemployment, its cause, and what to do about it. Most everyone cheered and honked their horns in support of the convoy.

In Washington the convoy met up with the Baltimore chapter and representatives of UWOC chapters from the Middle West.

In a park six blocks from the railroad station where one of the six inaugural balls was being held unemployed workers, youth and vets assembled into a torch light march. Three hundred strong they started to march to the inaugural site to make sure Jimmy Carter and his like were not going to party in peace. Before they could get to the site, however, the cops forced them to put out the torches, scared that the demonstaters would ruin Jimmy's party.

Opposite the inaugural site there was a rally with speeches from UWOC representatives, a speech from the Revolutionary Communist Party, and songs from a Philly Singing Group. Speakers talked about how the rich are attempting to do away with unemployment benefits. As one speaker put it, "Unemployment benefits are a luxury the rich cannot afford. A high rate of unemployment keeps the wages of all workers down." The speakers also talked about how the rich are in a serious crisis and how are forced to try to back away from benefits which were won in order to try to keep their profits up and save their sinking system. They need the unemployment funds to prop up failing industries and banks. To them, what are the lives of a few million unemployed? The way they see it, they could save money by cutting unemployment benefits, then jack up profits by forcing workers to slave in their factories at minimum wage or less.

UWOC vowed to fight against this attack by organizing a nationwide struggle against the cutoff. UWOC chapters are taking out petitions and informing thousands of people. As the March 31st deadlines comes closer there will be increasingly sharper struggle involving thousands of employed and unemployed workers throughout the country.

The vets contingent which marched with UWOC in Washington as well as vets and VVAW members all over the United States stand shoulder to shoulder with unemployed workers in this fight. Many vets know about unemployment --vets' unemployment rates are even higher than the already high national average. With UWOC we demand Jobs or Income Now and No Cutoff in the Federal Extensions.

Come to UWOC Demonstration Fight the Cuts in Washington Sat. March 5

(For more information call your local VVAW chapter.)

Vietnam,cont'd

weapons and counterfeit currency in co-operation with the CIA.

These former anti-war activists are only being used by this country's ruling class which is still trying to slander Vietnam in order to keep Vietnam out of the United Nations, to keep from paying reparations the US promised to pay at the war's end and to somehow salvage that goal it failed to gain militarily - to smash the spreading ideas of socialism and national liberation.

VVAW Chapter at L.A.C.C.

VETS BEAT SUSPENSION

At Los Angeles City College (LACC), as in a number of colleges around the country, there is an officially "recognized" chapter of VVAW--and there still is one despite attempts to get VVAW thrown off the campus and suspend its charter. These attempts collapsed in the face of a determined struggle built by members of the college chapter.

In early December, a series of leaflets, including the name of VVAW, appeared in mail boxes of club representatives and were sent to some members of the college administration. VVAW, which had nothing to do with the leaflets, went to the administration to disclaim any responsibility; all on its own, without going through any of the channels usually followed to suspend a campus club, the administration informed VVAW that its charter was suspended.

The original leaflets, making all kinds of violent threats, were in fact only an excuse. While it isn't clear who wrote the leaflets, it is clear that the college administration doesn't want VVAW around. As the VVAW Chapter said in their leaflet put out the next day, "The real reason is that VVAW is not just having fundraisers and parties, we are exposing the cutbacks in the GI Bill, the lousy treatment of vets, and WE ARE DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT!" The chapter also began an immediate petition campaign to demand an end to the suspension, a retraction of the administration lies, and that the administration stop suspending clubs without prior investigation, open hearings and a vote of the student body.

Realizing it had bitten off more than it could safely chew, the administration quickly changed its tune and decided to give VVAW an "administrative suspension." Meanwhile, VVAW members collected 120 signatures on their petition in just a couple of hours. And the new declaration from the administration didn't change things. As a second VVAW leaflet stated, "We are calling on all students, teachers, clubs and workers here at LACC to join us in this fight against the suspension and to defend the hard won right to organize."

Through a series of leaflets, talking with students, taking the question to the Student Government, VVAW and the Revolutionary Student Brigade (a national student organization which, although it wasn't even chartered at LACC was nevertheless "suspended" by the administration!) made the issue of the right to organize into a campus-wide issue. The administration, backpeddling as fast as they could, gave in and, two weeks after suspending VVAW, "removed" the suspension. VVAW and the student body as a whole won a victory.

While this struggle was going on, VVAW continued to work around the campaign to Extend and Expand the GI Bill and fight attacks coming down on vets. A meeting of 20 vets, called at the height of the struggle but turned into a victory celebration, took up ways in which to build the vets struggle. Vets talked about conditions on the campus, where attacks were coming from and what to do about it. People testified throughout the meeting about their own experiences; one vet applied for a $600 loan, was told to fill out the paperwork, be turned down for the loan by two banks, and come back with proof of all this for the $600 loan. But, by the time he had gone through all this process, he got only $160 because the 8% increase in the GI Bill disqualified him for the larger loan that he needed.

And the vets at the meeting decided to build the Campaign to Free Ashby Leach because it would bring out all the things that vets face. His 5 years of letters, petitioning, picketing, etc, is what vets have been doing for years and

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Disabled Vet, VVAW Win Struggle

100% Disability Won Back

With the support of the local chapter of VVAW, Jerry Bolin, a disabled Cincinnati Vietnam vet beat back an attempt by the Veterans Administration to slash his disability payments from 100% to 70%.

In Vietnam in 1968, Jerry was hit by an AK47 round and totally disabled. In July of last year, the VA suddenly and indiscrimately cut Jerry's disability back to 70%. And that was just the beginning: there followed an eviction, arrests, no checks, late checks, underpayments--all the kinds of harassments and abuses that vets have learned to expect from the VA. Since disability checks don't make a profit for the rich who rule this country, they use their agencies such as the VA to try to put the squeeze on vets who they hope won't fight back.

Cincinnati VVAW, of which Jerry is a member, took up the case seeing that this was not just a isolated attack on a single vet, but the kind of abuses that vets face every day all over the country. When the VA was confronted with VVAW's demands for reinstatement of the 100% disability, their reaction was typical: "This is not the VA's problem," they said; "It is Jerry's problem."

VVAW had a different solution; "We think this is all vet's problem," the chapter said, "and we're gonna make it your problem."

With that approach, the chapter begin to build for a demonstration on December 14th at Jerry's re-evaluation hearing at the Cincinnati VA hospital. Faced by the growing struggle of Cincinnati vets, the VA gave in and reinstated Jerry's 100% disability payment even before the demonstration took place.

The VA's concession was a real victory for Jerry, for VVAW and for vets. However, the VA's attacks didn't stop, and neither did the struggle against them. The capitalist rulers of this country, through their agent, a local probation officer, gave Jerry a choice: either go to jail, leave his wife and kids (so they would get welfare which was more than his disability check) or commit himself to the VA hospital psychiatric ward(apparently under the theory that if you want enough money to feed your family, you must be crazy). Even worse was the reason they gave: "Under this financial strain (which they had caused!) you are a threat to society."

VVAW went through with a demonstration on December 14 as a continuation of the fight against VA red tape, disability cutbacks, and the VA keeping Jerry in the hospital.

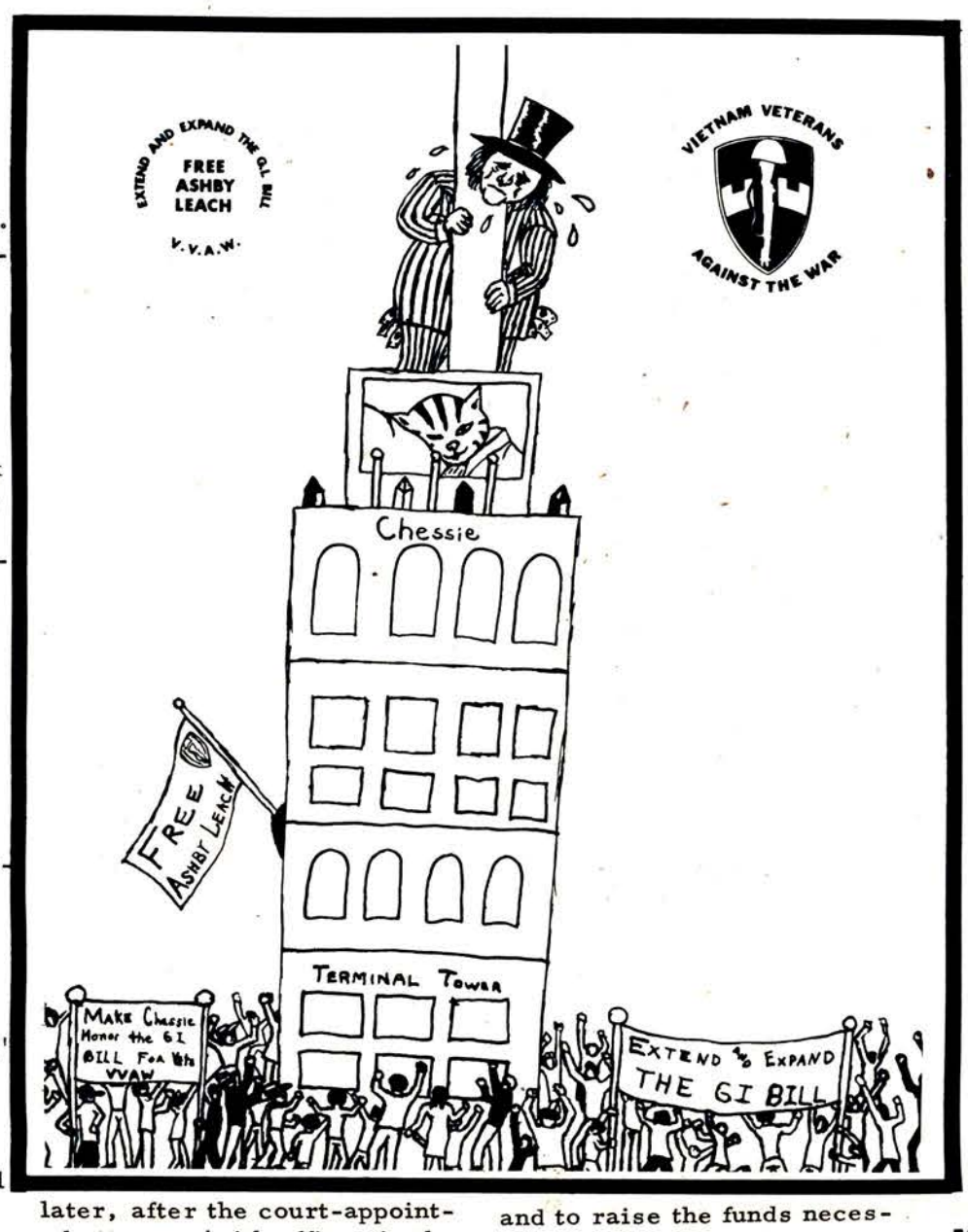
Disability cutbacks have, for a long time, been one way the VA tries to save a few bucks for the rich by coming down on one vet at a time, as in the case of Jerry Bolin in Cincinnati. VVAW has taken up disability cutbacks around the country and found that, when vets get together to fight against them, the VA backs down. Here, VVAW members support the disability fight of Paul Allen in Milwaukee.

Vets Call Cleveland Demonstration (cont'd)

from the Veterans Administration, he wrote to Congressmen and Senators and even, along with his wife, picketed outside a Huntington, West Virgina hotel where Hays T. Watkins, Chessie President, was staying.

All this activity got him nowhere; the corporation--which was quite ready to use Ashby and other vets to fight wars of profit overseas when they were in the military--had no more use for him after he got out, and refused even to hire a clerk to process the necessary forms for GI Bill payments. So, on August 26th, armed with a shotgun stuffed with copies of the letters he had written, and a .25 caliber pistol, Ashby went to the Chessie headquarters' offices on the 36th floor of Cleveland's Terminal Tower, took over one of the offices, and held 13 Chessie employees for nine hours. As Ashby put it later, corporations like Chessie "will use their lawyers, lobbyists, political power, and financial power to squash you and beat you legally when you know you're right. Sometimes a person must fight back."

Ashby surrendered peacefully, having hurt no one, after Chessie agreed to his demands --that Chessie honor the GI Bill for all its Vietnam veterans, and reimburse those past employees who had been cheated out of the Bill. Chessie broke the agreement as soon as Ashby was under arrest, and, through its influence with the police and the courts, tried to crush the resistance of Ashby Leach by charging him with 16 felonies and holding him under $450,000 bond. Three months later, after the court-appointed attorney (with offices in the same Terminal Tower Building as the Chessie Headquarters) was discharged, bond was reduced to $100,000, and Ashby's family raised the money. Ashby Leach is now engaged in a nationwide tour being sponsored by VVAW in order to build support for the campaign to Free Ashby Leach and to raise the funds necessary for the defense.



Not only did Ashby Leach demand benefits for all the Vietnam-era vets in the Chessie System, but in the way he was treat by Chessie, and the way he fought against that corporation, he represents veterans all over the country. Used once by the rich to fight their war and then thrown aside--but refusing to cave in under these abuses.

It's because of what Ashby represents that Chessie first tried to have him declared insane and put away in an asylum (that attempt was defeated when he was found "competent" on January 27th) and is now pressing to have him found guilty and jailed. Chessie and the class of corporate parasites who live off the blood and sweat of working people cannot afford to have resistance to their rule be successful. But they will see that thousands of vets, workers, students all view the campaign to Free Ashby Leach as one front in the overall battle against them and their rotten rule.

Ashby Leach and supporters outside a Cleveland courthouse following their victory in the "competency" hearing. At the same hearing, Judge Sawicki set March 14th as the date for the trial to begin.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Join VVAW or the Ashby Leach Defence Committee and work to free him.
2. Sign and circulate the petition demanding that Chessie honor the GI Bill for all vets.
3. Set up a meeting at your union or community group for Ashby Leach or VVAW or the ALDC to speak on this vital issue.
4. Make a contribution to the Ashby Leach defense fund.
5. Join the letter-writing campaign for these demands. Letters may be sent to Office of the Prosecutor, Cuyahoga County Court, 1200 Ontario, Cleveland, OH 44113, and to Cyrus Eaton, Chairman of the Board Emeritus, Chessie System, Rm 1319 Terminal Tower Bldg, Cleveland, OH 44101. Please send a copy of the letter to the ALDC.
6. Come to the demonstrations being called by the ALDC and VVAW in Cleveland on the 1st day of his trial.
7. Tell your friends about this case, give them leaflets, help spread the word.

FREE ASHBY LEACH

MAKE CHESSIE HONOR THE GI BILL FOR ALL VETS

EXTEND & EXPAND THE GI BILL

For more information or literature about the campaign, get in touch with the ALDC and VVAW:

in Cleveland: ALDCand VVAW, PO Box 09100, Cleveland, OH 44109; phone: (216) 741-3796.

in Huntington: ALDC, PO Box 2403, Huntington, West Virginia 25709; phone (304) 522-1309.

VVAW National Office: PO Box 20184, Chicago, Il 60620; phone: (312) 651-1583

EXTEND AND EXPAND THE G.I. BILL
FREE ASHBY LEACH
V.V.A.W.

COME TO CLEVELAND!

Latest Incident - Klan at Camp Pendleton

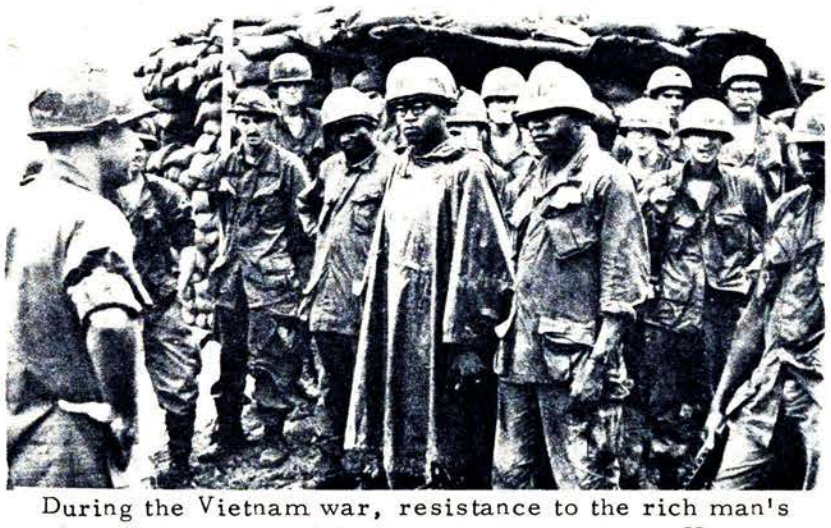
Discrimination and Resi

KKK SURFACES AT CAMP PENDLETON

During the last half of 1976 the Ku Klux Klan surfaced and began peddling its racist hate propaganda at the 32,000 man Marine Base at Camp Pendleton in Southern California. The Klan put up and passed out its "White Man Awake" posters and leaflets. They burned a Black officer's car, openly wore KKK insignia, threatened Black Marines and openly called for recruits to come to KKK meetings. When the Klan called for a meeting on November 13th, fourteen Black Marines went looking for the meeting. Mistakenly, they went to the room next door where four whites and two Chicanos were partying. These six were severely beaten, and the Klansmen got away without a scratch on their smelly hides.

The Black marines are sorry that innocent people were hurt. Two of the Blacks have pled guilty and been sentenced, one has had his charges dropped, and the other eleven await courts martial on charges ranging up to attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder. The Marine Corps brass has taken the position that this action of the Black marines is totally divorced from the Klan activities preceding it. Some of the Klansmen on the base (estimated at a total of 16) have been transferred. None of the Klan have been punished. During pre-trial hearings, a cross was burned at the base, despite the commanding general's assurances that the last of the Klan was gone. David Duke, Grand Dragon of the Klan was allowed free access to the base "to protect the rights of white servicemen."

All of us who have been in the service have heard at least a half dozen lectures on how everyone is equal in the military. It starts out in basic training where your DI tells you, "You're all equal here--you're nothing--less than nothing." (This is closer to the truth than any of the later lectures.) Then somewhere along the way a chaplain will tell you, "In the eyes of God and the Yewnited States Marine Corps, you are all equal." Then later on the first sergeant or company commander will be telling you that here in the army, "We're all equal. Work hard, keep your nose clean and you can have a successful career and get back to the world as a fine citizen."



During the Vietnam war, resistance to the rich man's war and to military discrimination mounted. Here the troops at Firebase Pace refuse to go into combat.

Despite all these fine-sounding words, the truth is that the US military services discriminate against national minorities. This racial discrimination is a reflection and extension of the racial discrimination in American class society. Its roots lie in and it is maintained for the purpose of enforcing the super exploitation of minority workers by the American capitalist class. This exploitation ranges all the way from keeping them in lower paying jobs and paying them less for equal work, to the higher cost of food in minority neighborhoods.

To further their interests the ruling class promotes racial conflict through their schools, politicians and especially through its media--TV, radio, newspapers. They try to get working people to fight among themselves along race lines for the things we all need --good housing, good schools, jobs. Blame the other race for your problems so people won't get together to fight the real cause: the rich and their system.

In addition to their slick propaganda, the ruling class promotes hate groups like the KKK in order to stir up trouble and keep people divided. The Klan arose after the Civil War. It was formed by property owners and merchants who lost valuable "property" when the slaves were freed. Using terrorism and lynchings they attempted to keep Blacks in their "place." Where once they were slaves on plantations, they became sharecroppers on the same plantation lands. Down through the years, the Klan has continued to exist with the blessings of the rich because they are still trying to keep Blacks in their "place"-- in proportionately higher unemployment, in substandard housing, in bad schools. Slick, degenerate Klan organizers like "Redneck" Tom Metzger in the Camp Pendleton area find frustrated, backward whites to build their filthy organization. Playing upon the dissatisfaction these young Marines have with life in general and the military in particular, the KKK found a few Marines to start an organization at the base, and the Marine Corps brass went right along with it.

Racist trash being put out by KKK at Camp Pendleton.

Allowing the Klan to exist inside the Marine Corps is a brazen example of the racism built into the US Armed Services, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. Discrimination that exists in civilian life is carried over into the military with a few added goodies. Segregated housing, language barriers, a ban on expressions of national culture such as slave bracelets and the dap, lack of promotions, little soul music in the clubs, extra harassment for minorities--and on and on the list goes. All of this is hard to take, but the guts of the facism in the military comes down in three areas: job placement, the Uniform Code of Military Justice(UCMJ) and combat arms.

It all starts out when a young kid gets sucked in by the recruiter (or drafted--the Pentagon is pushing to get the draft reinstated because there isn't enough manpower to fight the coming war). He's got no job, no trade, no future. He's Black. He wants to learn a trade or just get off the streets. After a month he's out of that career as a computer operator (which is what he enlisted for) and now in training to be a cook, or a small arms specialist or 11 Bravo (infantryman). What happened? Well, he took the Armed Forces Qualification Test. One of two things happened. Either he did poorly on the test because he was trained in an inferior high school, schools common in the inner city. Or he did well on the test, but failed to get the job anyway because that's how the military operates. Studies show that at the same pay grade and with the same test scores, Blacks will be assigned to combat duties over white servicemen at a ratio of better than 3 to 2. So, right away, our recruit gets off on the wrong foot.

One of many multinational act in West Germany to protest th

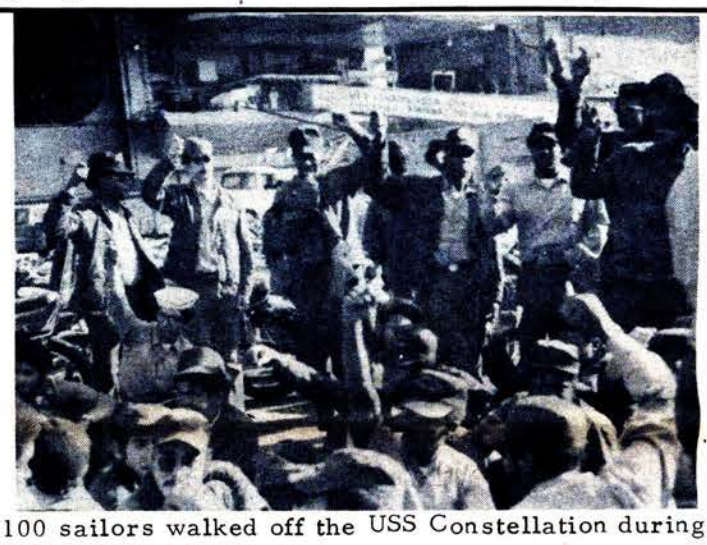
on
esistance in the Military

The Defense Department doesn't recognize Latinos as having a separate identity. Therefore statistics aren't available about what happens to them, nor to American Indians, Samoans, Guamese or other US subjects available to the draft. However, you can bet your last buck that the statistics concerning discrimination against Blacks will probably be the same for these minorities or even worse because of language barriers.

The UCMJ has nothing to do with justice. Instead it is a hammer held over the heads of enlisted people to keep them in line--an absolute necessity in a military which uses the sons of the working class to fight unjust wars for the profits of the rich. And, as can be expected, that hammer comes down hardest on minorities. Article 15s--non-judicial punishment--are handed down to Blacks at a rate about 25% greater than their proportionate numbers in the military. Courts martial come down heavy on Blacks--more than double the proportionate number as whites. Punishment is about the same for all servicepeople, but Blacks are hit the heaviest with pre-trial confinement which is often used as a way for a commanding officer to get someone out of the company for a few days or a few weeks. The result is that military prisons are filled with about half Blacks when the number of Black enlisted men in the service was only about 12% during the Vietnam-era, and is 20% today. The most devastating part of this "justice" system is the "less than honorable" discharges handed out. Bad paper goes far beyond the punishment needed for the "crime." It affects the veteran throughout his civilian life, cutting him off from VA and GI Bill benefits and from job opportunities. Again this hits Blacks heavily. Bad paper for Blacks is roughly three times the proportion of Black enlisted men. And the vast majority of these punishments, from Article 15s to the bad discharge, are handed out for crimes that would not even be felonies in civilian life. Most, including the majority of bad discharges are handed out administratively--that is, without a trial and according to the whim of the commanding officer.

In the combat arms--the people who do the actual fighting--the number of minorities is again double that of their proportionate numbers in the military. As in civilian life, minorities are found in large numbers in the lowest jobs. As one Puerto Rican Vietnam vet put it, "When I had two months to go in high school, they came and told me I was drafted. I couldn't even speak English. I learned English by hanging around with Americans during infantry training." Puerto Ricans had been declared US citizens in 1917 on the eve of the US entry into World War I. Their new "rights" didn't include much beyond the right to go off and fight in that war which went a long way towards making the United States the imperialist power it is today. During these wars that benefit only the rich in this country, minorities are made to pay a heavy price in lives and injuries for the benefit of their oppressors.

And so it goes for minorities inside the "Yew-nited States" military. But that is far from the whole story. There has always been resistance to this oppression. Just as in civilian life with the Civil Rights movement and the struggles which went on before that. Just as Black, Latino and white workers today are getting together to fight the boss and the daily oppression in this country, there has been a determined struggle going on inside the military. In a thousand ways GIs have resisted, everything from going AWOL to refusing to go out on patrol in Vietnam to fragging gung-ho officers. During the Vietnam War revolts sprang up everywhere. Sometimes they were organized and sometimes spontaneous. Sometimes they showed the united action of all races; sometimes they were minorities standing alone.



Over 100 sailors walked off the USS Constellation during the Vietnam war to protest the war, and working & living conditions.

One company refused to fight in Cambodia. One unit at Fort Hood refused to go put down the demonstrators in Chicago at the 1968 Democratic Convention. In Vietnam and Europe soldiers rebelled. Aboard the Kitty Hawk, the Constellation and the Little Rock sailors rebelled against the war and against national oppression. In 1973 in the Army's 2nd Infantry Division stationed in Korea, following months of harassment of all troops and discrimination and severe judicial punishments of minorities, a protest against the prohibition of the Black liberation flag turned into a pitched battle with Blacks and Puerto Ricans standing up against the MPs. This action resulted in a victory with several commanding officers being removed and only a couple of the militants brought to trial.

And in 1976, 14 Black Marines attempted to attack the Ku Klux Klan and all it stands for at Camp Pendleton, California. The eleven Marines going up for trial have the support of VVAW. Once again the rank and file have risen up against oppressive conditions.

The Pendleton case has seen the sorry spectacle of so-called Black leaders and white liberals copping out of support for this just struggle. The Urban League has deplored the violence. The ACLU is defending the "free speech" of the Klan. Congresswoman Burke of the Congressional Black Caucus has declared that the Klan has a right to exist. VVAW says that garbage belongs in a garbage dump. Groups like the Klan and the American Nazi Party (another hate outfit which the ruling class has given a lot of free publicity in their media lately) should be smashed.

One event in the history of VVAW of which we are proud occurred during the anti-war demonstrations at the Republican National Convention in 1972. A group of Nazis tried to speak out their rotten ideas and members of VVAW proceeded to shut their mouths and break their bones in the process. That's what scum like these deserve and it's right to smash them. The Marines at Camp Pendleton deserve support as they are one more example of the way people can fight back against their oppression.

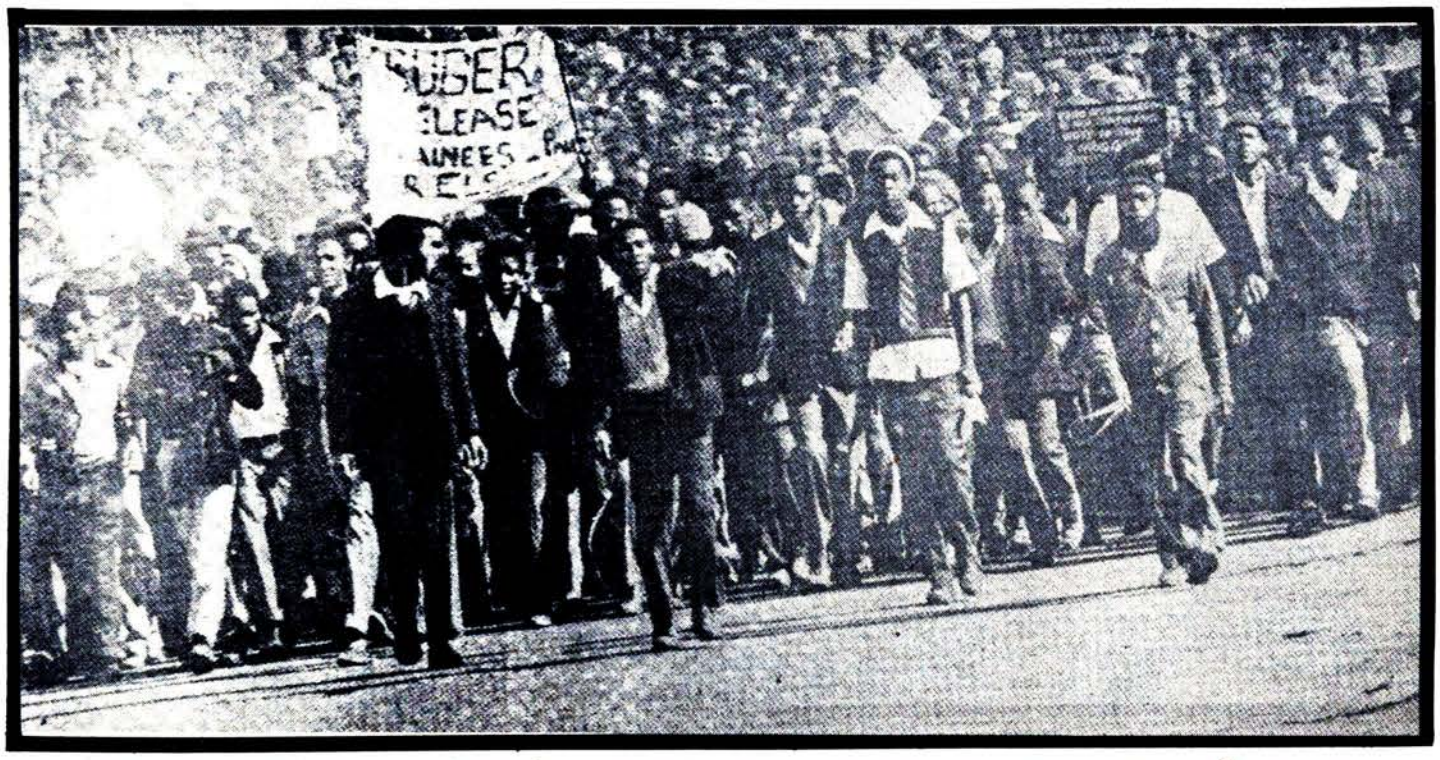
ational actions - Black and Latin GIs march at Munster Army Base protest the burning of a Ku Klux Klan cross - September 17, 1971.

Talks or No Talks

Zimbabwe Freedom Fight Advances

All over the southern part of Africa fierce struggle is erupting as the people fight to throw off century-old chains of colonialism. While this story deals with some of the specifics of the struggle in Zimbabwe, at this time the focus of some of the most intense fighting, similar struggles are going on all over the southern part of the continent.

The people of Zimbabwe have won great advances in the last year in their struggle to liberate their country from the clutches of the white settler Rhodesian government headed by Ian Smith. The convening of the Geneva talks, which recently collapsed, was a response to this growing strength. The purpose of these negotiations, which were set up by the US and conducted by Britain, was not to end minority rule in Zimbabwe but to cool this struggle and attempt to preserve through a peaceful settlement their economic and political interests in the area. Until then Smith had tried simply to ignore the liberation struggle politically and crush it militarily.



Students in South Africa take to the streets in protest against the regime of Prime Minister Vorster; this demonstration took place in Soweto, the Black township outside Johannesburg. Uprisings against the racist apartheid policy and for majority rule have been growing since June and the struggle for liberation is growing here as in the rest of South Africa.

Last September there was a great hoopla in this country's press when Smith announced his agreement to negotiations and to majority rule "in principle." Kissinger, Ford and others declared that the "Rhodesia conflict" was on the way to settlement and there was no need for further fighting. This was their primary purpose for negotiations, to undercut support for and stop the armed struggle and to prevent through negotiations what they were losing on the battlefield.

The Smith regime has faithfully protected the billions invested in Southern Africa by US and British corporations and they will continue to support him for as long as possible. But as the struggle in Zimbabwe has grown stronger, together with the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in southern Africa and upsurges against white supremacist rule in South Africa, the US and Britain are not betting all their chips on Smith winning. For, in the last year, the number of guerrillas fighting against Smith's rule within Rhodesia has increased tenfold, while the zones they are more or less free to operate in have increased fourfold in area.

Also, as long as the conflict there continues, the rulers of the US and Britain are concerned that the Soviet Union will exploit the war by stepping in as they did in Angola, to further their own imperialist aims for Africa. Thus, through a negotiated settlement, the US and Britain hoped to appear to be "responsive" to the liberation forces and to put over a settlement short of complete liberation. By setting up and promoting "moderate" black leaders who would be dependent on them and look favorably on continued investment by Western countries, they hoped to preserve the area and its resources for their continued plunder and profit.

Phoney Acceptance of Majority Rule

Smith, on the other hand, hoped to stall for time through negotiations to allow him to strengthen his military, economic and political positions to continue to fight to preserve minority rule. Smith stuck to the "Five Point Plan" reached privately between him and Kissinger as the only basis for a settlement. But this settlement was no settlement at all, but a ploy to preserve the status quo. The main thing it called for was an immediate cessation of the armed struggle by the liberation forces. The plan then would set up an interim government which would keep the ministries of police and internal security--the armed forces of the government--in the hands of Smith's ruling party, as well as allowing it veto power over any actions of the interim government.

In addition to his insistence on this plan as the basis for negotiations. Smith's actions throughout the Geneva conference showed what a sham his acceptance of majority rule was. At the same time he was making pretensions at peace, his government stepped up attacks on the people of Zimbabwe and neighboring countries, killing 600 civilian men, women and children in one raid along the Mozambique border.

But the plans and schemes of the imperialists and the Smith regime to trick the Zimbabwean people to lay down their arms have come to nothing. They know that the only reason talks were conducted at all was due to their successes on the battlefield and the growing desperation of Smith and his imperialist backers. They were not about to give up through talk the gains their struggle was winning. Instead, they used the negotiations to strengthen their own forces while further exposing and weakening their enemies.

As those of us in VVAW who fought in Vietnam learned by experience from the Vietnamese, the strength and unity of the Zimbabwe people will continue to grow by their not waiting passively and futilely for independence to be handed to them but instead by mobilizing the people to take their destiny into their own hands. The Zimbabwean people have shown that they can break through the schemes thrown in their path and fight on to complete victory.

THE VETERAN
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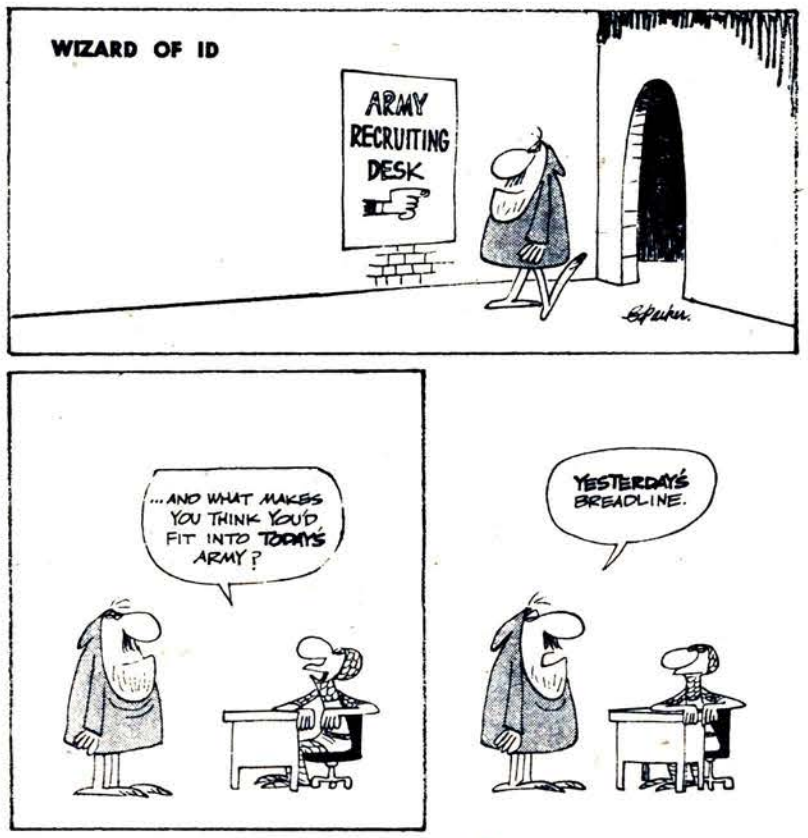
L A Vets Talk to Recruits

DON'T BUY RECRUITERS' LIES



As both 1976 and the GI Bill came to a close, newspapers and TV broadcasts all over the country made a big splash about the rush of people enlisting in the military. Enlistments jumped by as much as 1000% in some places as people who saw no future for themselves in the job market hurried to take advantage of a GI Bill that was being hyped to the skies. And while it's true that the new GI Bill (which went into effect for people enlisting after January 1, 1977) is so bad that it makes the Vietnam-era Bill look good by comparison, nowhere did the media point out how inadequate the Vietnam-era Bill actually is.

In Los Angeles the newspapers had headlines reading "Big Rush To Enlist in LA." Enlistment there jumped from 50-75 daily to 500 and more during the final days of the year. In response to the media blitz, members of VVAW and Youth in Action, a nationwide organization of young people taking up the fight for a decent life, went down to the Armed Forces Induction Center to take this attack on. Some went right into the Center to talk with the recruits there. The rest started leaflettting the people coming in and out, mostly high school kids. And most of them talked about schools like holding pens, no jobs, no future, hanging out and getting busted. There was nothing to do except enlist, a situation familiar to thousands of veterans.

VVAW members told these new recruits about the way they were used, the way their friends and buddies were blown away, disabled or killed so some rich bastard could squeeze profits out of Vietnam, Korea, or some other country. The vets talked about rotten conditions in the military, the repression and racism, and the caste system with peons and snuffies--the vets--on the bottom and the brass and rich on top getting fat. And then, from hard personal experience, the vets talked about how, after the rich had used them, they had thrown vets away like a no-deposit pop bottle. Vets are thrown off the GI Bill--and the Bill is only worth 1/3 of what is was worth back in 1944 when vets won it after fighting for 30 years to get it; and then there are the butcher shops they call VA Hospitals and disability checks cut back (like the vet who was cut back from 100% to 80% because he had "adjusted to being totally blind."

Many of the recruits knew that the demonstrators were there. Some went in after talking to the vets and asked some embarrassing questions of the recruiters; some exposed the recruiters around the raw deal they were getting. Finally, a Lieutenant Colonel and his flunkey, a Sergeant Major, the people who run the Center, came out to try to chase the demonstrators away. In fact, they were so scared of seeing vets and youth getting together that the Colonel was stuttering when he tried to speak. They set up a "brass barricade" of officers to try to keep the vets and youth out, and the recruits in. But this backfired when it attracted more attention and several recruits and even a sergeant came through the barricade to take leaflets and rap.

While everyone wasn't talked out of enlisting, a couple of young people were persuaded; the rest are armed with some knowledge of the rotten conditions in the military and the threat of another rich man's war.

Through this experience both youth and vets found a real basis of unity in fighting for common interests. As the American people get hit by higher unemployment and the threat of another war continues to grow, the rich will try to force millions into the military. These attacks will have to be turned around.

As the leaflet which the vets and youth were handing out said, "We aren't just fighting, we are going to win, knocking the rich and their flunkies off our backs once and for all. For those who have already signed up or who have no choice, when the rich start their next profit war and send us out to fight it, we'll know which way to aim.

DON'T VOLUNTEER
OUR FIGHT IS HERE

GI IN KOREA WRITES

"I can't wait to get out"

On August 18, 1976, the infamous "Tree-Cutting Incident" came close to starting another war in Korea. A group of US troops went into the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) to cut a tree so they could get a better view of North Korean positions, in clear violation of the 1953 Truce Agreements. The North Koreans reacted and in the ensuing fight, two American officers were killed.

The following letter comes from an American GI stationed near the DMZ and tells of the attitude of the GIs who would have been on the front lines if another war had broken out.

"On August 18th, a 3-hour drive from Chun-Chou, South Korean Alpha Battery was out participating in field manuevers. We were gassing up our trucks to return when the word came down. Our Sergeant told us that we were on orders from high command to be on stand-by alert. Not practice stand-by alert, but the real thing. We knew from our training that there are 4 phases of alert. The first, spotting the so-called enemy; second, having contact; third, stand-by; and fourth, war! When we reached Camp Page we were told of two officers being killed on the DMZ. We were all told to assemble in the Section Room for further orders.

"We were told again that this was the real thing, all passes or leaves were cancelled, all personnel were to assemble our combat equipment. As we returned to the barracks we started to discuss how our gas masks weren't in good enough shape to work nor were a lot of our weapons. And in this condition we might have to fight. The sergeants were everywhere telling us, "Don't worry about it. It will probably be an air war with a lot of bombing, not that much infantry or artillery units (like us) would be used.'"

"But to us, the enlisted men, who for the most part were in the military due to no jobs and a hope for some benefits to help us in the future, there wasn't much enthusiasm to fight the North Korean people. We had found out first hand that the army wasn't anything like the recruiters told us. It was everything that our friends and brothers told us it would be like --getting the shaft and being used.

The guys weren't all riled up about staying on alert. We just hoped it would be settled quietly and without us having to die. I felt like I was in prison. When you're in prison you don't tell the man you want to go home; he'll just laugh at you. It seemed to be just that situation.

We stayed on alert for one month after the August 18th tree incident. We were sure glad when it was over. I tell you, it ain't worth going into the army. And when you get in and find out what can happen to you--you can die for nothing. I just can't wait to get out."

In Boston, Illinois....

GI BILL STRUGGLES WIN GAINS

In Boston in early February, veterans at the University of Massachusetts College III were told that their GI Bill was cut off. College III does not grade its students in the traditional way, but instead uses the pass/fail grading system. The VA cannot monitor a vets progress, call him in for "counseling" and throw him off the GI Bill because his grades have plummeted from an "A" to a "B." So, the VA chopped the vets off the Bill.

Seeing their chance for an education rapidly disappearing, the vets called a meeting to find the best way to fight the cutoffs--and that was all it took. The VA backed down; almost immediately the vets were informed by the VA that it was all a "mistake."

Not only has the VA been backing down when faced by determined resistance. Other agents of the same ruling class have also slithered away from unified groups of veterans. In Illinois, when a Committee of the State Legislature went into a hearing where they hoped to eliminate the Illinois State Military Scholarship program (under which the state pays vets' tuition), 200 vets packed the hearing. Though political analysts predicted the vote would be close, the presence of a large group of angry vets helped produce an 18-2 vote against the cutoffs. (That struggle is not yet over since the state has now decided that it has only 1/2 the necessary money to pay the scholarships, and Illinois veterans are beginning to organize for a prolonged struggle.)

These relatively small attacks, which can have such a devastating affect on the lives and futures of individual vets, are coming down all over the country. They are not, as the VA would like us to believe, a "mistake," but instead part of a concentrated offensive to throw vets out of school and thus save, for the ruling class, the bucks they can use to invest and make a profit from. Hundreds of thousands of late checks are not a mistake: neither are the numerous media attacks on vets who "cheat" on the GI Bill and try to turn public opinion in favor of whatever cuts they make in the Bill in the future.

And, more significant, there is no "mistake" about the new GI Bill which eliminates the present system (see the last Veteran for more details). And, although the new Bill is sweetened up for vets by including an 8% raise in benefits (to cover a 32% cost of living increase!), it also features the end of advance payments for vets on the Bill. Simply, that means that most vets are going to have to come up with the tuition payments and fees themselves without any help from the Bill; in turn, that means that hundreds of thousands of vets will not be going to school simply because they don't have the money, particularly in the face of constantly rising tuition costs.

The examples of what happened in Massachusetts and Illinois point toward the direction veterans must go.

VVAW has a national campaign to Extend and Expand the GI Bill. This country is in an economic crisis, and the country's rulers are trying to save a few bucks at the expense of veterans. We say that we must organize and fight to defend what we have, to make the Bill better and to have it cover all veterans. It is only by getting together in our numbers, as demonstrated in Massachusetts and Illinois, that we can accomplish our aims.

VVAW Chapters around the country continue to demand: Extend and Expand the GI Bill. Here, an action in New York City.

Army Promises Turn Sour

Archibald Montgomery wanted to learn Russian, so he joined the Army. He went to the recruiter's office, was painted a picture of an office in an Embassy, training in Russian and an assignment in Moscow or in Washington. Archibald signed on the dotted line.

He thought everything was fine. "I'd get a fabulous education in Russian," he said, "and use it for four years, come out, go to law school on the GI Bill and be set. It was a dream come true."

But the dream turned into a nightmare. After he was in the Army he didn't get the job he was promised. Instead he was sent off to a unit of the 9th Infantry Division in Alaska, and told that he would be a "voice interceptor," learning only some Russian words for numbers and military terms. An officer told him that he probably wouldn't even be doing that.

So what would he be doing? "I'm not even certain where I'm going or what I'll be doing. Counting polar bears? Test thermal underwear?" In fact it turns out that he will be loading trucks and digging ditches, not close to what he was promised.

Montgomery has joined in a class action suit with 25 other GIs who are in similar situations charging the Army with breach of contract. They all want discharges.

Thousands of GIs found themselves in the same position. During the Vietnam War, many men joined the Army and volunteered for specialized fields, hoping that they wouldn't have to go to the war. But many did go and many of them didn't come back. Now with the all-volunteer army the same thing is happening.

With the economic crisis many join the Army, lured by the extensive advertising campaign about "the only jobs in town," and by the reality that there isn't work to find. But as the Mongomery case shows, once people get into the military, then the military does what it wants. The Army needs infantrymen, the backbone of their power. They've got to fill those slots, and if your name is picked, you wind up on the line, ready to fight for the rich man as millions of vets did during the Vietnam war. And it doesn't really matter what kind of job you have in the military either; the whole purpose of the military is to defend the rich man's system. Once a person joins the military, defending the rich becomes the primary MOS.

The Army will promise anything to get recruits only to do what they want to unsuspecting individuals once they're in. One high school graduate said that he was going to join the Army to get on the GI Bill. But he wasn't told that the GI Bill is drastically changed for new GIs, forcing them to pay $75 a month for using the Bill in the future. And there are countless examples of the same sort of military lies.

Montgomery, as a college graduate, had advantages in already knowing how to take up the legal battle against the military. The majority of military recruits don't have that kind of background. As Montgomery said, "You have to ask what they do to the average enlistee . . . the guys who don't know how to fight it, who sign up for one thing and get something completely different."

While it is important to understand, and know how to use the military "justice" system, hundreds of thousands of GIs have resisted the hassle and harassment of the military brass over the years. The lies of military recruiters are no exception, as vets around the country help to expose them for the fairytales they are.

LETTERS TO VVAW

VVAW and The Veteran welcome your letters and other contributions to the paper. We believe that vets of all eras share the need to fight for a decent life, and look forward to your comments.

To The Veteran:

I am a 28-year old Vietnam veteran. I served in Vietnam in 68-69 where I received multiple fragment wounds to the neck and head. This left me with a loss of strength in my left side and a seizure disorder. For this I receive 50% disability.

Employment is very hard to find. I had a job at International Harvester Co. They were aware that I was a disabled vet. One day I had a seizure at work, the first I had had in 8 months working there. The company doctor told me to take off a while. When I returned to work, the company officials, Harry Beive, Al Robertson and Lou Ellis called me in and told me I was terminated because on my application I didn't say I was receiving money for disability from the VA. They also refused to rehire me, saying they had no position I could fill due to my health problem. Even though there had been no complaints about my performance during the 8 months I had worked there.

To me it is pretty clear that the reason for my termination was because of my disability. I am just as capable of doing the job as anyone. As long as I'm regularly taking my medication I don't have any problem with seizures. In my opinion I'm being discriminated against. I feel that I should be given my job back with full back pay or be granted total disability from the VA.

I do plan to expose this company to the public. They were a major contributor to the Vietnam war, but they don't want to honor the vet. They have no disabled vets working there even though they are under contract with the government to hire a certain percentage. They are not living up to their promise and I don't plan to sit back and let this type of action go by without bringing public notice to it.

As far as I'm concerned this is just one incident in many where the Vietnam veteran is being pushed aside and ignored. I think that it is time to unite and fight back once again for our rights that were once promised to us.

William K. Curry
Baltimore, MD

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed please find a $6 money order for your paper, The Veteran. I wish I could send $6 million as I believe you could use every cent of it to carry on your good work, as it looks like another war will take place in a year or two. But I can't as I am on a small old-age pension, but I'll do whatever I can. At 79 years of age I'll never see a world without war but you young people may at least hope so. Wish everyone a happy New Year, if possible.

Yours truly,

E.R.Coleman
Los Angeles

Pardon Actions(cont'd)

the local American Legion boycotted the Inauguration Day Parade in protest against the pardon, the VVAW chapter held a picket line at the Navy Recruiting Center 3 days after the pardon was announced. As the chapter pointed out, it was important to show that the Legion and similar vets' organizations do not speak for all vets, and particularly do not speak for Vietnam veterans. In fact the draft resisters committed no crime--they were right! The real criminals are the ruling class of this country, the military generals and the government officials who waged the war against the Indochinese people.

In San Francisco, the Bay Area VVAW Chapter brought together 40 people at the Federal Building on the day that the "pardon" was announced, demanding amnesty and a single-type discharge for all vets. (See photo on page 2.) A press conference several days later emphasized how VVAW's demand for amnesty is closely related to our slogan that we won't fight another war for the rich who sent us off to Vietnam for their profits.

As one part of VVAW's reaction to Carter's "Pardon," the Philadelphia Chapter, shown here, was joined by a Gold Star Mother For Amnesty.

In Madison, Wisconsin, a debate was held between VVAW and a state official of the VFW. When VVAW talked about rich man's war, the VFW commander immediately declared that his organization was also opposed to rich man's wars and had always stood against them. When asked where he--and the VFW--were when VVAW was in the streets protesting the war in Vietnam, however, the VFW representative could find nothing to say.

In a VVAW press conference in Chicago, a VVAW spokesman to how Carter's "pardon" simply divided resisters according to the time they learned to resist--whether we refused to register for the draft, fought back by deserting once we were in the military, or demonstrated against the war once we got out, it was all resistance to the same unjust war.

In other cities around the country, VVAW members held picket lines, handed out leaflets, conducted press conferences, wrote letters--all showing our determination to fight for universal, unconditional amnesty until it is finally won.

JoinVVAW

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) is a nationwide organization of veterans from all wars which fights for the needs of vets and stands shoulder to shoulder with working people in our common struggle against the rich man's system. VVAW chapters across the country are building a national campaign to Extend and Expand the GI Bill, are demanding Jobs or Income Now, and are saying that We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War.

VVAW grew out of the movement against the Indochina War as veterans of that war joined together to fight against US involvement. And, as the US government was forced to withdraw, VVAW began to turn its attention to the way in which veterans have been used once and then thrown away.

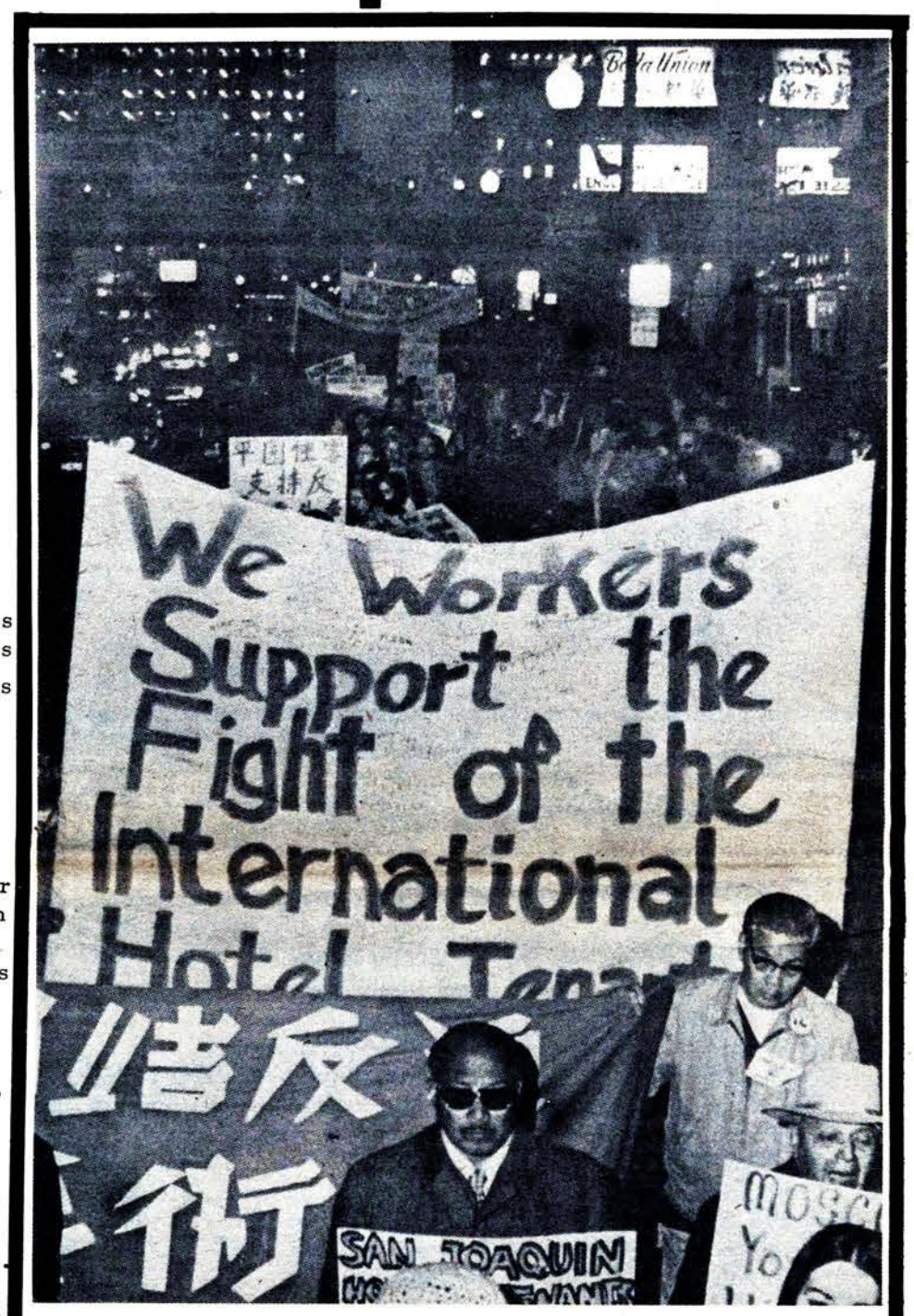
Membership in VVAW is open to veterans and others who want to build the veterans' struggle. It includes selling The Veteran (the VVAW national newspaper), wearing a VVAW button and paying dues; all members are encouraged, as much as possible to participate in the activities of local VVAW chapters. VVAW is a democratic organization with major decisions made by the membership at periodic regional and national meetings. For more information on joining VVAW, contact the local chapter or the VVAW National Office, P. O. Box 20184, Chicago, IL 60620. (312) 651-1583.

Bay Area VVAW Member Describes Tenants' Struggle

Thousands Rally To Stop I-Hotel Eviction Attempt

For 8 years tenants of the International Hotel, a residential hotel in San Francisco's Chinatown-Manilatown district, have been waging a fierce battle to prevent the attempts of the city and of big corporations to evict them from their home. The struggle has been a history of huge landlord corporations working through the city government and the sherriff getting eviction notices and trying to force the tenants from the building; each time there has been an upsurge of mass anger organized into demonstrations and other actions which have forced the authorities to back down. The struggle has sparked growing support--each time the authorities try again to throw out the tenants, they are met by greater and stronger resistance.

The following article was written by a member of VVAW in the Bay Area and talks about his involvement in the International Hotel battle; it was written during the most recent attempt by the city to evict the tenants which, like all those before, was successfully resisted.



3000 workers and others demonstrate in support of I-Hotel tenants; several nights later, 5000 people demonstrated.

It was 2:30 AM Sunday morning--only a day and a half before the scheduled eviction of the tenants of the International Hotel. There were about 3 of us doing night watch on Kearny Street in front of the Hotel. The San Francisco Sheriffs Department and police could try to evict at anytime. We were on guard in order to alert people and mobilize our phone tree should an eviction attempt occur. This is how we felt as cars drove innocently by the hotel: "It was the same feeling you had when you were in combat. A pain in your stomach... a dryness in your mouth. Out there on that dark street lay over 500 cops from the entire SF Bay Area on alert, waiting to come down on the tenants and throw them into the streets. It was a sick, tense feeling."

But there was one real big difference between Vietnam and here--this time we were fighting against the rich class and their system instead of for them, and that's why we've been fighting so hard for the last 8 years against 2 landlords and numerous eviction attempts

What kind of system is this we live under that would barricade streets and call out 500 cops and sheriffs to throw 70 retired Chinese and Filipino workers out of their homes? Only several months earlier, Sheriff Hongisto's deputies murdered a 73-year-old Black man when he refused to be evicted. The rich and their corporations want and need the International Hotel property so they can put their investments to further work and make greater profits, all the while pushing us down further. These profit-hungry animals are the same type--the same class--that tried to destroy Vietnam in their effort to save it for their own plunder. Their system is a profit system, a system they try to force us to live under every day. But people everywhere are standing up and saying NO MORE! You can see it right in front of the International Hotel.

The power of the people united stopped the eviction. Over 5000 people rallied in the street two days before the eviction deadline. Eleven thousand have signed the petition, and masses of people in the Bay Area stand in firm support of the tenants.

This is why the capitalists call out over 500 cops. This is why the cops have to barricade the streets. This is why the court backed off and postponed the eviction--all because of our united strength.

Trying to divide people, the police put out reports about automatic weapons and bombs being stored in the Hotel, and about the immediate threat of violence. But thousands know that these are lies aimed at trying to weaken our fight. The tenants have weapons alright--those weapons are the united, organized and militant support of thousands of people. We've backed the sheriffs, the police and the courts down four times. We'll back the whole rich class and their gang at City Hall down until they buy the International Hotel and keep it for low-cost housing and community centers. We are united, organized, disciplined--WE WILL WIN!

THE VETERAN
Vietnam Veterans Against the War 25¢

____ ONE YEAR, $6 ____ INSTITUTIONS, $15

SUSTAINERS ____ I would like to become part of the monthly sustainer program. I will contribute $_____ a month. This includes a subscription to the VETERAN.

CONTRIBUTIONS ___ I would like to contribute $_____ to building VVAW and the VETERAN.

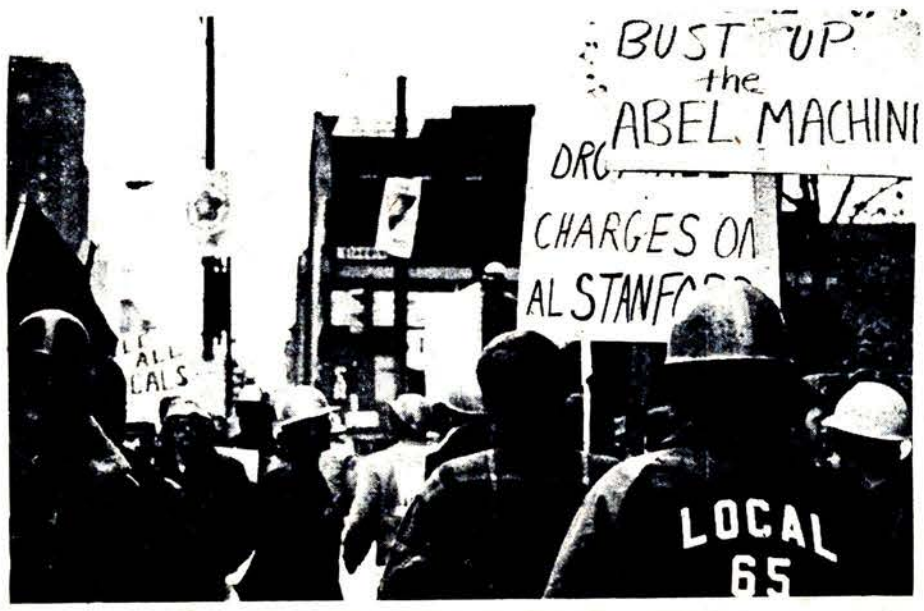
Contributions to VVAW are Recognized by the IRS as TAX DEDUCTIBLE!!

Make checks payable to Vietnam Veterans Against the War
Box 20184, Chicago, ILL 60620

Against Both Company and Union Hacks

Rank and File Steelworkers Continue Their Struggle

On Feb. 8, the United Steelworkers of America held their much publicized election of national officers. The contest was billed as a battle between the young reformer, Ed Sadlowski and the old guard machine represented by Lloyd McBride, a lieutenant of I. W. Abel who has ruled the union with an iron hand for the last several years.



Rank and file steelworkers stage victorious demonstration in front of union international headquarters in Pittsburgh to remove Local 3059 from the international's administratorship.

Abel himself had originally been elected as a reform candidate, but over the years he became entrenched in the union to the point where he had earned the hatred of rank and file steelworkers. The Abel machine has co-operated with the steel companies all the way. The way Abel and his followers understand things is in opposition to the experience of the rank and file. The Abel crowd says that the only way workers can get ahead is to co-operate with the steel companies, and if the companies prosper, the steelworkers will prosper.

It is not at all a coincidence that this kind of outlook makes things easier for the union hacks. They don't have to do the hard work of fighting the steel companies; they don't have to get their hands dirty mixing with ordinary workers, and they get to sit back in their plush offices collecting handsome pay checks. However, the experience of the workers on the shop floor give a different, more accurate picture of the steel companies. That daily experience teaches that no matter how prosperous the steel companies get, they will nevertheless try to squeeze more from the labor of the workers. From the daily harassment to criminal medical facilities to the constant threat of layoffs, it is clear where the companies are coming from. Profit is king, and they'd like to keep workers bowed down before the king. Abel and some of his cronies have been trying their best to keep workers down, and have themselves been rewarded for their efforts by being made eunuchs in the court of King Profit.

Some of the lowlights of Abel's regime have been his agreements with the companies around the Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA) and the Consent Decree. The ENA gave away the right to strike until 1980 in return for supposedly higher wages and binding arbitration. The strike is the most powerful weapon in the worker's arsenal, and to give it up is like going to war with bows and arrows. Thus when 40,000 jobs were lost in the industry since 1971 due to the combining of jobs and when massive layoffs hit two years ago, the union leadership wasn't able to fight this cutback (even if it wanted to).

The Consent Decree was supposed to eliminate discrimination, but all it has done is eliminate the seniority system with discrimination still present. Also, within the union, the right to ratify national contracts has been taken from the rank and file and put in the hands of a national committee who (you guessed it) follow the lead of the union misleaders. All this heritage of sellout unionism has been passed on to Lloyd McBride who defeated Ed Sadlowski in the election.

Workers in steel have been fighting their oppressive conditions all along, but over the last couple years that fight has been heating up and getting organized. The failing economy has hit the steel industry as well as everything else, and the companies are trying to take it out on the workers. Working conditions have worsened, layoffs are coming down heavy, jobs are being combined and sped up. Rank and file organizations such as Breakout in Chicago, Steel Unity in Sparrows Point, Md. and On the Move in Seattle have been formed, and individual workers have more and more voiced their displeasure with both the steel companies and the union. All this unrest was focused on the recent election where Sadlowski, to a large extent, represented the gathering momentum of the workers and McBride represented the old union and its policy of looking out for the best interests of the companies.

Sadlowski was no hero. He was pushed up to where he was and what he stood for by a rank and file beginning to stand up and fight for their rights and needs. His campaign served to stimulate that fight and expose the current union leadership for its role in protecting the companies' interests. That he lost does not mean the end of the battle to make the union a real force that fights the companies for the needs of steelworkers. The organization and clarification of where each side stands were real advances coming out of the election campaign.

The rank file have not let up in their efforts to take on the companies and the union heirarchy. On February 14, the day negotiations began for the new contract, rank and file steelworkers held a demonstration outside the Washington hotel where the union and companies were working out their latest deals. They presented the demands of steelworkers to smash the ENA and the Consent Decree, fight discrimination, defeat productivity drives, fight company attacks on working conditions, turn the union into a strong weapon in workers' hands and for jobs now for all workers. Look for continued struggle from rank and file steelworkers in the future.

LACC Vets

continued from page 6

getting nowhere.

After deciding to Build VVAW and to Take On the VA, 10 of the vets carried an Extend and Expand the GI Bill banner through the school going to see Mr Thayer, head of the Vets Office, to put him on notice that VVAW was on campus to stay and is fighting back. When Thayer said that most vets don't have any hassles, half the vets in the room immediately pointed out abuses they had suffered. Finally, Thayer offered to "work with the vets" by appointing a liaison man--which the vets translated as meaning he wanted to talk to one vet at a time instead of ten.

With attacks coming down on vets in schools all over the country, attempts like that of the LACC administration to defeat resistance, or to divert it into other channels, will grow. But vets at LACC have a program and a direction which won't be stopped. News about this struggle has already been taken out to other Los Angeles colleges and vets all over the city know about both the victory and the continued battle going on.

Book Review: Born on the Fourth of July

VIVID MEMORIES, NO ANSWER

The new book Born on the Fourth of July by Ron Kovic will bring back a lot of memories to veterans, especially those of us who served in Indochina. Powerfully written, the book takes us through the author's early life, boot camp, Vietnam, rotten VA hospitals, and a short, peripheral visit in the anti-war movement where Kovic belonged to VVAW.

The book is written entirely from the perspective of the author and from his experiences, and we can relate to many of those experiences, the book never goes beyond these personal glimpses. Nowhere do we find a thread that points to the reason for Vietnam, nowhere do we come away with the understanding of why we were sent halfway around the world to bleed and kill, and were then dumped back into a system that would as soon as not have seen us die overseas.

The problem is not that there aren't experiences in the book to bring this out. In chapter after chapter our memories are jarred and emotions enflamed. On the war: "I felt that everything from my chest down was completely gone. I wanted to die. I threw my hand back and felt my legs still there. I couldn't feel them, but they were still there. I was still alive. And for some reason I started believing, I started believing that I might not die. I might make it out of there and live and feel and go back home again. I could hardly breathe and was taking little short sucks with the one lung I had left. The blood was rolling off my flack jacket from the hole in my shoulder, and I couldn't feel the pain in my foot anymore, I couldn't even feel my body. I was frightened to death. I didn't think about praying, all I could feel was cheated.

"All I could feel was the worthlessness of dying right here, in this place, for nothing."

On VA Hospitals: "The walls are almost as dirty as the floors and I cannot even see out of the window....I push the call button again and again. No one comes. I am lying in my own excrement and no one comes. I begin shouting and screaming.... I have been screaming for almost an hour when one of the aides walks by."

The American Legion: "They (Kovic and another disabled vet named Ed) sat together watching the big crowd and listening to one speaker after another, including the town dignitaries; each one spoke very beautiful words about sacrifice and patriotism and God....but he kept thinking of all the things that had happened to him and now he wondered why he and Eddie hadn't even been given the chance to speak."

The police at an anti-war demonstration: "There is a tremendous commotion all around me. Someone is kicking the dead part of my body that can't feel anymore....'I'm a Vietnam veteran! Don't you know what you are doing to me?' Kicking me and hitting me with their fists, they begin dragging me along. They tear the medals I have won in the war from my chest....The red-haired man throws my body into the back seat, my dead limbs flopping underneath me. 'Get in there you fucking traitor.'"

By the end of the book one is shaken but left with no better understanding than when he started. Why did all of this happen? Was it all a mistake? Was his experience an isolated one? Maybe it's just an insane world where nothing makes any sense.

That's the problem with the book. The reason for it is that Kovic sees individual incidents but never sees them as a part of a whole, doesn't connect them with the overall pattern of his life or the lives and experiences of other vets or of the veterans organizations he belonged to. Vets have in fact learned something from the war and from our experiences afterwards, both fighting against the war and fighting for a better life in the civilian world.

Like the author a lot of us went into the service out of patriotism, a sense of pride in our country, a genuine desire to be on the front line defending "freedom." But we learned that "those beautiful words" were used to cover some not so pretty realities. Liberty didn't mean people being able to live their lives in peace in Vietnam. It meant liberty for the capitalists of this country to rip off Vietnam. The "pursuit of happiness" is more like the pursuit of profits. And as for "life," well, they would have given our lives as well as the lives of the Vietnamese in the pursuit of profits and their liberty to plunder the world.

When we came home, we ran into the police, the butcher shop hospitals, the "patriots" ready to glory in our blood. But what was happening did not remain a mystery. The police were used to stop us just like we were used to put down the Indochinese people. With guns and clubs the police defended the system of the rich in America as we had done with guns and napalm in Vietnam.

There is no profit in VA hospitals. So it's no surprise that we who were no more than cannon fodder should be thrown on the trash heap when we are no longer good for any profit.

Yes, we saw and we learned that we were no more than a piece of toilet paper to be used and then flushed away. Yet this book draws no conclusions, points no accusing finger, and that is why it is being pushed. It is a well written book that tells the truth about the experiences of Vietnam veterans. Vets of that war wouldn't buy any John Wayne cover over our real life experiences. So the rich come up with an accurate description of those experiences and hope that we will either feel bad and just try to forget it, or feel bad and not tie it all together.

There's another reason this book is being pushed, and that is because of its author. The rich have used him in the past, not just to fight their war but to try to misdirect the struggle of veterans. In 1974 VVAW called a national demonstration in Washington, DC, to demand Universal, Unconditional Amnesty; End the War in Indochina; Kick Nixon Out, and Decent Benefits for All Vets! Kovic tried to organize his own group and received the backing of almost every politician from Goldwater to Kennedy in his attempt to sabatoge the VVAW demonstration. He began his "demonstration" on the same day to steal the press and, while thousands of people from VVAW were battling the police just to be able to march, Kovic and his 90 people were trying to beg Nixon for sympathy.

Kovic's group went out of existence after his demonstration; VVAW went on to demand a better life not only for vets but for all working people, pointing our finger at that rich, capitalist class that uses us again and again in their factories for profit and in their wars to protect and expand those profits.

The book is selling well and a movie is planned. We'll read the book and probably see the movie. We'll take it for what it is worth and remember. But we won't just shed a tear and feel bad. We'll take those memories, those experiences, those emotions, and turn them against the system that uses us and then throws us away.

Local Address